

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
June 27, 2007, 4:30 p.m.  
Council Chambers**

**PRESENT**

Trena Carter  
Ian Kohen  
Greg Lewis  
Tony McClendon  
Akua Ofori-Boateng  
Gil Palmer  
Rosalind Pegram  
John Roberts  
John Stroh

**ABSENT**

Jay Myers  
Jason Staley

**\*\*\* Meeting Called to Order \*\*\***

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Director Arlette Tinsley and Secretary, Lula Young.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Secretary Roberts called roll then requested any corrections or changes to the May Minutes. Commissioner Stroh recommended that the minutes state when a quorum was obtained enabling the Commission to conduct official business.

**Commissioner Carter moved to accept the May Minutes with Commissioner Stroh's amendment. Commissioner McClendon seconded. Motion carried.**

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Commissioner Ofori-Boateng reported the May 23, 2007 Donations Account balance as \$3,585.60. After annual dinner expenses and revenue, the account balance as of June 27, 2007 is \$6,130.60.

**ACTION ITEM: WELCOMING COMMUNITY COALITION:**

With the approval of Commissioners, Director Tinsley introduced Sondra Bolte, a representative of the Welcoming Community Coalition (WCC). Ms. Bolte was attending to address any Commissioner questions resulting from the WCC request for the Human Rights Commission to become a member of their organization.

Ms. Bolte advised she was present to address the questions and concerns Commissioners voiced about the Commission signing on as a member of the WCC such as the potential that the Human Rights Commission name could be used or associated with any political activity,

especially without Commission knowledge or approval. Ms. Bolte advised that in response to that concern, the WCC had amended their statement to include the language, "It is not the intent of the coalition to engage in political lobbying, but to promote dialogue in the community. However, if members are moved to take political action on a specific topic, the coalition name would only be used if approved by each member."

Director Tinsley provided positive feedback on the first event sponsored by the WCC – a one-man play entitled "Remember Who Made You" which included a discussion session following the performance. The discussion had multiple viewpoints discussed. The Director estimated attendance at over 100 people with a good mix of high school students and senior citizens from local churches. Director Tinsley advised she was proud of the community and the leadership of the WCC for sponsoring the event.

Ms. Bolte informed Commissioners that the presentation was underwritten in part by First Presbyterian Church Witness Committee and the Gay/Straight Alliance. Ms. Bolte went on to discuss the focus of the WCC is to keep dialogue going about GBT issues within the community in the belief that if people have an opportunity to talk about the issues rather than slurs the perception will change.

According to Ms. Bolte, other organizational partners that have signed on include the First Presbyterian Church Witness Committee, The Unitarian Universalist Church, The Disciples of North Christian Church, Minister Larry Moyer, and a Cummins Affinity Group in addition to many individual sponsors. They are continuing discussions with other local organizations. Commissioner discussion ensued with Ms. Bolte.

**Commissioner Stroh moved that the Human Rights Commission become a member of the Welcoming Community Coalition. Commissioner Lewis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **OTHER BUSINESS – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:**

Director Tinsley informed Commissioner's of the technical assistance request received from Valerie Chowning of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Chowning requested assistance for the Columbus Young Professionals (CYP) 'Amazing Race' event. Ms. Chowning requested suggestions for challenge activities that reflect the diversity of the Columbus community. One of the challenges already in place involves contestants shopping at an Indian grocery.

Commissioners and staff voiced the following suggestions: Tutor ESL students one afternoon at Clifty Creek Elementary, tutor at the Columbus Enrichment Program on a Saturday morning attend an NAACP meeting. Commissioners also suggested participants attend a meeting of the Interfaith Forum – meetings are the first Wednesday of each month, -eat lunch in a high school cafeteria, attend a G/SA event, work at the IVY Tech bookstore during fall registration, attend the August 11<sup>th</sup> Community Outreach sponsored by Faith, Hope and Love Church. Director Tinsley advised she would submit the suggestions and/or contact information to Ms. Chowning.

#### **ACTION ITEM: 45<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:**

Director Tinsley discussed the 2008 Annual Dinner, where the 2007 Annual Report will be presented, marks the 45th anniversary of the Human Rights Commission. In compliance with the Rules and Regulations, the vice-chair, Tony McClendon, makes appointments to sub-committees or ad hoc committees. The vice-chair can choose to appoint himself to the committee or not. Commissioner Roberts has volunteered to be part of the committee.

Director Tinsley offered suggestions on how Commissioners may choose to observe the 45th Anniversary of the Commission such as garnering interest from a high school senior for their project and allowing them to interview past commissioners, community members or members of the international community, discussing what issues they face next. Other ideas included having the first Commissioner of the Commission to be the speaker or another former commissioner - Jim Joseph was a member during a controversial time within our community. Director Tinsley mentioned the scrapbook previously compiled by Deputy Director Smith. Other ideas included having one or more 'lunch and learn' series or 'Forty-five (45) days of Human Rights' as previously suggested by Commissioner Roberts. The topic was turned over to Vice-Chair McClendon at this time who advised he would confirm committee appointments and meeting dates later.

#### **ACTION ITEM – BUDGET APPROVAL:**

Director Tinsley submitted the proposed 2008 budget under the General Fund to Commissioners for approval. Director Tinsley provided an overview of the budget categories and requested increases to be submitted to the Mayor for his review before the budget is presented to the City Council. Discussion ensued.

**Commissioner Lewis moved to accept the 2008 budget as submitted. Commissioner Ofori-Boateng seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **ACTION ITEM – BCSC DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE:**

Director Tinsley provided an overview of the technical assistance she had previously provided to Dr. Quick and the BCSC Diversity Leadership Committee. The technical assistance recommendation that included non-BCSC community members to maintain regular conversations that are not just crisis oriented. She went on to inform Commissioners that two of the names she had suggested were Gil Palmer and Frank Griffin. Dr. Quick has invited both to join the BCSC Diversity Leadership Committee. Lisa Gutierrez is another candidate submitted by Tracy Souza for Dr. Quick's consideration. Discussion ensued.

**Commissioner Lewis moved to appoint Gil Palmer and Frank Griffin for one year to the BCSC Diversity Leadership Committee with review for the second year. Commissioner McClendon seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **OPEN FORUM: COMMUNITY CONCERNS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Chairperson Palmer recognized visitor, Alison Kocur who introduced herself and advised that she is a senior at East high school and is currently attending summer school. Her presence at the meeting is for her Government & Economics course. Miss Kocur went on to advise that she is the president of the Key Club and a member of Show Choir, International Thespians and the National Honor Society. Commissioner McClendon acknowledged Miss Kocur's participation as a long-distance runner for the East track team.

Commissioner Roberts announced that as of July 1, 2007, Tom Snyder has been appointed as the new president of Ivy Tech State College. He shared that Mr. Snyder's goal to make Ivy Tech faculty represent the culturally diverse area it serves. Commissioner Roberts also shared news that he is now the Program Chair of English, Speech & Communications at Ivy Tech. He was congratulated.

Chairperson Palmer advised that the I.U.P.U.C. Diversity Council is looking at the same issue on how to diversify the faculty and hope to utilize a recent appropriation of two million dollars to accomplish that goal.

Commissioner Pegram reported that two or three Spanish speaking Ivy Tech students started a new organization called L.O.V.E. (Latin Organization Volunteer in Education). Their goal is to put together a program to use during visits to middle and high schools and show students how they can go to college if they wish to. She invited Commissioners to attend one of the group's first meetings on Thursday, June 28 at 2:00pm in the Ivy Tech Lecture Hall.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Director Tinsley updated Commissioners that over the last month, staff has received multiple requests for technical assistance. Some of the issues involved BCSC, a noose in the workplace and the NAACP. Staff has also provided technical assistance to approximately twelve families in a mobile home park who have complaints that were both civil rights and public health related. Director Tinsley advised she has been working on this assistance for approximately three months in conjunction with Mary Ellen Nelson, Family School Partners and Laura Hurt of CRH Healthy Communities. The technical assistance provided is helping the families access the legal process including HUD (Housing and Urban Development), IDEM, which supervises water quality, and the Health Department, which monitors raw sewage on the ground. In order to contact the relevant agencies, Director Tinsley advised she obtained confidentiality waivers from the residents and put them on file so that she may call the relevant agency on their behalf.

She went on to advise that as the landlord is extremely upset, Commissioners may be confronted in a manner similar to his approach to City Council, the Mayor's, BCSC and CRH staff when voicing his displeasure and should refer any calls from this landlord to the chairperson. Chairperson Palmer shared the landlord's threat to have Director Tinsley arrested for criminal trespass if she attempted to visit the families again.

Director Tinsley went on to report her additional activities included providing the legal perspective of the panel presentation at Commissioner Ofori-Boateng's request on Senate Joint Resolution 7 (SJR-7) – The Gay Marriage Amendment that previously failed in the General Assembly.

### **LIAISON UPDATES – GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:**

Commissioner Kohen inquired if the presentations and speeches had been recorded at the 2007 annual dinner. He went on to share a concern voiced at the G/SA meeting that the words 'sexual orientation' were not used during the discussion at the annual dinner. Several Commissioners advised that the verbiage was used during the presentations.

### **LIAISON UPDATE – INTERFAITH FORUM:**

Commissioner Lewis advised that he was unable to attend the last meeting of the Inter-Faith Forum but is now receiving regular communication.

### **LIAISON UPDATE – MULTI-CULTURAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE:**

On behalf of Commissioner Ofori-Boateng, Commissioner Carter announced that Rob Aspy has resigned from the Multi-Cultural Awareness Committee. If any community member has an interest in joining the Committee, they should contact Judy Johns-Jackson for membership information.

### **ADJOURN:**

**Meeting adjourned.**